DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 304 912 FL 017 869

AUTHOR Koike, Shohei
TITLE What Is Business Japanese? Designing a Japanese Course for Business Communication.
PUB DATE Apr 88
NOTE 18p.; In: Proceedings of the Seventh Annual Eastern Michigan University Conference on Languages for Business and the Professions (see FL 017 839).
PUB TYPE Reports - Descriptive (141) -- Speeches/Conference Papers (150)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Business Communication; Course Content; *Cultural Education; Higher Education; Instructional Materials; *Japanese; *Languages for Special Purposes; *Program Development; Second Language Instruction; Uncommonly Taught Languages; Undergraduate Study
IDENTIFIERS *Eastern Michigan University

ABSTRACT

Experiences in developing "Business Japanese" courses for the undergraduate major in Language and International Trade at Eastern Michigan University are described. In 1987, six new courses in Japanese were proposed so that Japanese could be offered as a language specialty in the program. Issues considered in defining business Japanese and in developing objectives for the courses are outlined, and the assumptions made in establishing realistic expectations of what students can learn in the available time are investigated. Considerations and conclusions concerning the inclusion of culture in the language courses are also discussed. Three proposed courses (Japanese for International Trade, and Business Japanese I and II) are described, and instructional materials are listed. Two pages of curriculum materials are appended. (MSE)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

641

ED304912

What is Business Japanese?: Designing a Japanese Course for Business Communication

by

Shohei Koike, Ph.D.

Department of Foreign Languages

and Bilingual Studies

Eastern Michigan University

In: Proceedings of the Seventh Annual Eastern Michigan University Conference on Languages for Business and the Professions.

FL017869

An increasing number of U.S. universities offer or plan to develop a business Japanese course or program. Despite the growing interest, little has been discussed on such key questions as: what is business Japanese?; what are realistic goals of a program?; and how do we design courses in business Japanese? The primay aim of this paper is to stimulate discussion on these questions among those interested in this new frontier in cross-cultural commnication. For this purpose, I will report on my experiences at Eastern Michigan University in developing business Japanese courses for the major in Language and International Trade program. After presenting one conception of "business Japanese," I will focus discussion on how and to what extent the culture component should be incorporated into business Japanese.

Background

Eastern Michigan University's undergraduate major in Language and International Trade program "is designed to integrate the study of modern foreign languages and cultures with preparation in the fields of international business" (EMU Undergraduate Catalog 1987-88, p. 110). Students are required to take thirty-six semester hours in courses in business, economics and area studies. In addition students must specialize in French, German, Japanese or Spanish. In 1987 six new courses in Japanese were proposed (pending official approval) in order to add Japanese as a language in which to specialize. The six proposed courses and the existing beginning and intermediate Japanese courses amount to thirty-eight semester hours. Although students are required to take eighteen hours in their chosen language, the prerequisites in Japanese are set up

in such a way that students with no prior study of Japanese usually must complete thirty-eight hours (some prerequisites may be waved with department permission). The thirty-eight hours of Japanese courses are as follows:

JPN 121 and 122 Beginning Japanese I and II (10 hours)
JPN 211 and 212 Intermediate Japanese I and II (10 hours)
JPN 343 Japanese Conversation (3 hours)
JPN 344 Japanese Composition (3 hours)
JPN 361 Japanese for International Trade (3 hours)
JPN 444 Advanced Japanese Conversation (3 hours)
JPN 446 Business Japanese I (3 hours)
JPN 447 Business Japanese II (3 hours)

Students in Japanese must complete the three business Japanese courses: JPN 361 Japanese for International Trade, JPN 446 and 447 Business Japanese I and II. The same language requirement also applies to EMU's new program Language and World Business, which is a joint-degree program combining the requirements of the Bachelor of Business Administration and the Bachelor of Arts in Language and International Trade.

Business Japanese

One may reasonably assume that effective cross-cultural communication in business environments requires both language skills and understanding of how business is conducted in foreign cultures. Base on this assumption, business Japanese is here defined as the study of Japanese language

and culture for business communication. "Culture" for business communication (hereinafter business culture) is used here in a broad sense, including business customs and practices as well as norms and values business people act on. Defined as such, business Japanese is far more than a study of the idiom and terminology of Japanese business. The study of business Japanese must help students to understand how and why the Japanese way of doing business differs from the American way or others.

Culture Component of Business Japanese

One of my major questions in developing business Japanese courses has been how and to what extent the culture component should be incorporatead. Suppose that students study the culture component all in Japanese, that is, not only through class lecture and discussion in Japanese but also through instructional materials explained in Japanese. In this case, students' proficiency levels suggest that their learning of the business culture will be very limited in quantity, if not in quality. On the other hand, more English is used in class and more English materials are used, the less opportunity will be given to students to improve their Japanese. There is certainly a trade off between how much of the language they can learn and how much of the culture they can learn. A key question is how much of Japanese business culture should be studied in English. My decisions regarding this matter are as follows:

1. Since JPN 446 and JPN 447 are advanced Japanese courses, the classes will be conducted primarily in Japanese.

2. Since JPN 366 is an introductory course of business Japanese, the class will be conducted approximately fifty percent in Japanese.
3. Students will study about fifty percent of the culture component in English primarily as homework assignments, which will constitute part of the preparation for class presentation and discussion in Japanese.

Whether the last point suggests a strong commitment to the culture component is a matter of personal judgement. In my judgement the answer is affrmative, considering the fact that the three courses are part of the language requirements for the major in Language and International Trade. In the following I will try to explain the reasons for emphasizing the culture component, discussing eight assumptions I have made on students' needs and characteristics, the job market, and institutional resoruces and constraints.

Eight Assumptions

In order to establish program goals, it is essential to evaluate how much students can realistically learn in four years. Proficiency tests are useful in considering realistic goals, but their value is limited until the fully operational program generates enough students to test. In fact, there were no candidates for proficiency tests when proposals were made for creating business Japanese courses. Therefore, I have made the following assumptions on how much students can realistically learn:

1. Most students cannot achieve a near native proficiency in Japanese in

four years when they start learning Japanese at college.

2. To most American students, speaking Japanese is much easier than reading and/or writing Japanese, which requires to memorize an enoumous number of kanji or Chinese characters.
3. Even though speaking Japanese is much easier, most students need to spend at least six months in Japan after finishing intermediate Japanese so that they may attain "advanced level" in the ACTFL oral proficiency guidelines by the time they graduate.
4. Students can learn much about Japanese business culture in a relatively short period of time when they study it primarily in English.

These assumptions lead to some speculations on what we can and what cannot expect our graduates to do in Japanese business environments and in dealings with Japanese business people. For example, our graduates cannot be expected:

a. to function as a professional interpreter for an advanced business negotiation which discusses detailed technical topics.
b. to effectively function as a translator of technical and scientific materials
c. to effectively write formal business letters in Japanese.

On the other hand, our graduates may be expected:

d. to acquire enough communication skills and knowledge of Japanese business culture to avoid misunderstanding which might result due to the lack of cultural awareness and sensitivity.

e. to function in orally communicating with Japanese business people and clients in informal business settings.

f. to learn how to socialize with Japanese personnel and clients in order to build up ningen kankei or interpersonal relations, which are essential for establishing and maintaining successful business relations with Japanese companies.

Like other undergraduate Japanese programs in liberal arts, our program is not designed to meet the demand for professional interpreters and translators. It is essential to investigate what other qualifications are being sought in the job market. For lack of sufficient first-hand data, I have made the following assumptions:

5. Most companies regard cross-cultural communication skills taught at liberal arts colleges as secondary to a strong background in business, engineering, computer, or some other marketable skills. However, the study of business Japanese enhances the marketability of students in business or some other fields.
6. The value of understanding Japanese business culture is not fully appreciated by U.S. business communities.

Business people who do not speak Japanese will appreciate the value of an interpreter in that they at least know they have to rely on him/her in communicating with the Japanese. However, the same business people may not acknoledge the significance of understanding business culture and having cultural sensitivity; they may not be aware of what they should know when dealing with the Japanese. An interpreter will not function as an

effective substitute for one's cultural sensitivity and understanding of Japanese business culture.

Two more assumptions were made on the basis of which to evaluate the significance of the culture component of business Japanese:

7. While the number of Americans who study Japanese will increase, English remains a dominant language in business between American and Japanese business people.

Although most Japanese cannot speak English with a near-native proficiency, many Japanese business people can function or at least survive in English speaking environments. Those Japanese business people and graduates of our program can be complementary to each other in oral communication.

8. Undergraduate students in advanced Japanese language classes know little of Japanese business culture. To those students the marginal return of studying Japanese business culture is relatively large while the marginal return of further studying Japanese is relatively small.

An additional small unit of time spent on studying Japanese will make little difference in improving proficiency of students in advanced Japanese classes. An additional semester hour, for example, is not likely to have a great effect on students' overall proficiency levels at the time of their graduation. On the other hand, the expected gain of understanding and knowledge of Japanese business culture is considered large when students spend the first semester hour on studying the culture primarily in English. It seems that the lost opportunity to improve the langauge skills is small,

and the cost will be far exceeded by the gain of understanding Japanese business culture.

The above discussion is summarized as follows: the culture component should be emphasized because it provides students with understanding and knowledge essential for dealing with the Japanese, while the lost opportunity to study Japanese hardly affects students' overall progress in proficiency in the language.

Japanese business culture may be incorporated into a course in such fields as business, anthropology, and sociology when it is taught all in English. In this case there should be co-ordination between a Japanese language instructor and an instructor who is strong in Japanese culture, business and economy. Even under this arrangement an instructor of business Japanese should be knowledgable of Japanese business and economy. The problem is that it is hard to find an instructor of Japanese who has also a strong background in business or social sciences. This situation will continue as a division of labor seems to be widening between those specializing in linguistics and/or Japanese pedagogy and those in other areas of Japanese studies including the Japanese literature.

Three Proposed Courses in Business Japanese

In 1987 three new courses in business Japanese were proposed with emphasis on the culture component. JPN 361 Japanese for International Trade focues on how to deal or negotiate with the Japanese; JPN 446 Business Japanese I provides an overview of the environments (economy, market structure, etc) in which the Japanese conduct business; and JPN 447 Business Japanese II takes a close look at the system of organization

and personnel relations of the Japanese corporation. Although none of the courses have been officially offered, JPN 361 was experimentarilly offered for the 1988 winter semester under an independent study. A brief description of each course is provoded in the following.

JPN 361 Japanese for International Trade is intended as an introduction to Japanese business culture and business communication in Japanese. This course provides an opportunity for comparative analysis of American and Japanese cultural patterns in business settings. Exercises in business communcation in Japanese focus on speaking skills with emphasis on further study of honorific and humble polite expressions. Students are expected to learn how to deal with Japanese business people in Japanese speaking environments. About fifty percent of the class will be conducted in Japanese. Topics to be covered will include:

a. basic cultural concepts for business communication
b. the Japanese business etiquette
c. the Japanese negotiation style
d. the decision making process of the Japanese corporation
e. socializing and ningen kankei or interpersonal relations
f. nonverbal communication and ambiguous expressions
g. how to be polite in business communication

Instructional materials will include:

1. Business Japanese II. Edited by the International Division of Nissan Motor Co. Tokyo: Gloview, 1985.

2. Graham, John L. and Yoshihiro Sano. Smart Bargaining: Doing Business with the Japanese. Cambridge, Mass.: Ballinger Publishing, 1984.

3. Hall, Edward T. and Mildred Reed Hall. Hidden Differences: Doing Business with the Japanese. Garden City, N.Y.: Anchor Press/ Doubleday, 1987.

4. JETRO. Nihonjin to Hataraku Ho (Doing Business in Japan). Japanese/ English. Tokyo: Gakuseisha, 1984.

5. Illustrated "Salaryman" in Japan. Tokyo: Japan Travel Bureau, 1986.

6. "Taking Your Product into the Japanese Market." 6-part video series. San Francisco: Copeland-Griggs Production.

JPN 446 Business Japanese I is intended to increase proficiency in business communication in Japanese and to develop knowledge of Japanese business and economy. The emphasis is on reading Japanese and English publications on Japanese business, economy, industry, market structure, and so on. Exercises in Japanese will include extensive work on the vocabulary and idiom of Japanese business and economy. Students will be expected to give reports in Japanese on news about Japanese business and economy. The class will be conducted in Japanese. Topics to be covered will include:

a. Japan's postwar economic growth

b. Japanese industry and company groups

c. the Japanese market and distribution system

d. labor force and education system in Japan

e. foreign trade and shosha (general trading companies)

f. the business-government relationship

g. financial institutions

h. Japanese consumers and their standards of living

Instructional materials will include:

1. Business Nippon: An Introduction to Japan's Economy for Foreigners. English/Japanese. Tokyo: Hokuseisha, 1987.
2. "The Colonel Comes to Japan." Video. Produced by WCBH Boston. Distributed by Learning Corporation of America, New York.
3. Japan (from the Economist, London). New York: Cambridge University Press, 1983.
4. Japan Handbook: JETRO's Desktop Economic Encyclopedia. Japanese/English. Tokyo: Kodansha, 1985.
5. Japanese Business Glossary. By Mitsubishi Shoji Kohoshitsu. English/Japanese. Tokyo: Toyokeizai Shinpo Sha, 1983.
6. Tainichi Urikomi Sakusen A to Z (Selling to Japan from A to Z). By Ministry of International Trade and Industry. Japanese/English. Tokyo: Gakuseisha, 1985.

Business Nippon (see 1 above) is a collection of the transcripts of "Business Nippon," a 30-minute English-language weekly television program produced by Japan Cable Television, Ltd. The book has the English transcripts accompanied by the Japanese translation; it also contains the titles and brief discriptions of 200 "Business Nippon" video tapes.

I am now developing a Japanese textbook to accompany the 6-part video "Taking Your Product into the Japanese Market" as part of a project funded by the Department of Education under Title VI of Higher Education Act for

International Studies and Foreign Language programs. The 6-part video series follow a fictional American salesman who succeeds in selling his company's product to a Japanese company after months of frustrations and disappointments. The diveo goes a long way toward explaining differences in negotiation styles between the the U.S. and Japan by focusing on the decision making process in a Japanese company. Since the video, narrated in English, is not designed for the language instruction, I decided to make a Japanese textbook to accompany the video. I designed the Japanese textbook in such a way that students can learn scence by scene how the negotiation proceeds and what significant points each scene presents (the textbook is not yet completed; see Appendix I for a sample).

JPN 447 Business Japanese II will provide an overview of the system of organization, managerial style, and personnel relations of the Japanese corporation. The course will also discuss difficulties Japanese companies are facing as they "internationalize" their operations, especially in the area of personnel relations with non-Japanese employees. Exercises in Japanese will foucs on business correspondence and translation of business documents. Students will be expected to learn how to use a Japanese word-processing program. The class will be conducted in Japanese. Topics to be covered will include:

a. the organizational structure of a Japanese corporation
b. Japanese-style management
c. employment, wage and promotion
d. building up a network of interpersonal relations
e. management-labor relations
f. working for a Japanese company

g. internationalization of a Japanese corporation

Instructional materials will include:

1. Abegglem, James C. and George Stalk, Jr. Kaisha, the Japanese Corporation. New York: Basic Books, 1986.
2. "Challenging the Deming Prize--TQC in the Service Industry." "Business Nippon" video. Distributed by Japan Cable Television, Tokyo.
3. "Employees Are Not Build in a Day." "Business Nippon" video. Distributed by Japan Cable Television, Tokyo.
4. Keitaro, Hasegawa. Japanese-Style Management. Tokyo: Kodansha International, 1986.
5. Ishida, Hideo. Kokusai Keiei no Ningen Mondai (personnel problems in international management). Tokyo: Keio Tsuchin, 1984.
6. Nihon Kampanii: Rupo Kokkyo o Koeru Kigyo (Japanese companies overseas). Tokyo: Yomiuri Shimbun, 1986.
7. Hitomede Wakaru Saishin Bijinesu no Chishiki Hyakka (new complete guidebook of Japanese business). Tokyo: Shufu-to-Seikatsusha, 1986.

Concluding Remarks

In this paper I defined business Japanese and discussed how and to what extent the culture component should be incorporated into a business Japanese program. Answers to this question depend on what one thinks of such factors as job market, students' needs and characteristics, and institutional resources and constraints. I presented several assumptions and speculations I made when the three business Japanese courses were

proposed for the Language and International Trade program. Based on these assumptions I decided to emphasize the culture component of business Japanese to the extent that students study about fifty percent of it in English as homework assignments, which will prepare students for class discussion in Japanese. The reasons are as follows:

1. It is most essential to understand the business culture when dealing with the Japanese.
2. The proficiency level most students may attain in four years suggests that language skills alone will not be very marketable.
3. The lost opportunity to study Japanese will hardly affect students' overall progress in proficiency in Japanese.
4. There is no other course at Eastern Michigan University which focuses entirely on the study of Japanese business culture.

It might turn out that some of my assumptions do not accurately reflect reality. However, this attempt at EMU is only a beginning of the development of business Japanese, and our program will undergo frequent review and revision. I only hope this paper will stimulate discussion on how to develop a business Japanese program.

APPENDIX I

PART III

場面１２　テレックスの波紋

登場人物

大日本技術社　［森脇（もりわき）副社長］
　　購買部　鈴木部長
　　山本課長
　　小西
　　木下（きのした）

あらすじ

マクスウェルは大日本の森脇副社長にテレックスで再訪問の意向を伝える。　テレックスは森脇から購買部の鈴木部長へ転送される。　鈴木部長はテレックスが購買担当の神埼取締役をとび越えて来たことに当惑する。　鈴木部長は山本課長に会談の出席メンバーを選ぶよう指示する。　山本課長は部下の小西と小西の同期で技術部第二課の小川と技術部第一課の山田課長をメンバーに選ぶ。

単語

1.	テレックス	telex
2.	波紋（はもん）	ripple, stir, repercussions
3.	再（さい）...	re-
	再訪問（さいほうもん）	revisit
4.	意向（いこう）	intention
5.	転送（てんそう）する	to forward, transmit
6.	とび越（こ）える	jump over, go over (one's head)

7.	当惑（とうわく）する	get embarrassed or perplexed
8.	出席（しゅっせき）	attendance, presence
9.	メンバー	member(s)
10.	選（えら）ぶ	to select, choose
11.	指示（しじ）する	to instruct, direct
12.	部下（ぶか）	subordinate, one's staff
13.	同期（どうき） or 同期生	classmate, peer, those with the same seniority, those who entered the company at the same time
14.	第二課（だいにか）	section #2, the second section

要点

11. 日本の会社と連絡をとる時は、適切なルートを通すことが重要である。トップを直接知っている場合は別にして、普通は中間管理職や担当部門の責任者をとび越えてアプローチすべきではない。

12. 日本側の交渉チームは 影響をうける各部門の意見が反映されるように選ばれる。

単語

1.	連絡（れんらく）をとる	to contact, get in touch
2.	適切（てきせつ）な	appropriate, proper
3.	ルート	route, channel (of communication, etc)
4.	通（とう）す	pass ～ through
	適切なルートを通す	use a proper channel of communication or contact
5.	直接（ちょくせつ）	directly, in person
6.	場合（ばあい）	case, instance
7	別（べつ）	a different matter, exception
	～は別にして	with the exception of ～, apart from ～